W.E.B. Dubois

Scholar and activist W.E.B. Du Bois was born on February 23, 1868, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. He studied at Harvard University and, in 1895, became the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard. He wrote extensively and was the best known spokesperson for African American rights during the first half of the 20th century. Du Bois co-founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909. He died in Ghana in 1963.

**Writing and Activism**

A year later, Du Bois published his landmark study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, marking the beginning of his expansive writing career. In the study, he coined the phrase "the talented tenth," a term that described the likelihood of one in 10 black men becoming leaders of their race.

While working as a professor at Atlanta University, W.E.B. Du Bois rose to national prominence when he very publicly opposed [Booker T. Washington](http://www.biography.com/people/booker-t-washington-9524663)'s "Atlanta Compromise," an agreement that asserted that vocational education for blacks was more valuable to them than social advantages like higher education or political office. Du Bois criticized Washington for not demanding equality for African Americans, as granted by the 14th Amendment. Du Bois fought what he believed was an inferior strategy, subsequently becoming a spokesperson for full and equal rights in every realm of a person's life.

In 1903, Du Bois published his seminal work, *The Souls of Black Folk*, a collection of 14 essays. In the years following, he adamantly opposed the idea of biological white superiority and vocally supported women's rights. In 1909, he co-founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and served as editor of its monthly magazine, *The Crisis*.



